

# The Orthodox Church

## What is Orthodoxy?

2 Greek words

1) 'Orthos'

2) 'Doxa'

Orthodox = right belief or true praise

## What is the Church?

- 1) Greek word for Church  
'Ecclesia' = the called out
- 2) The Church is people not a building  
(1<sup>st</sup> 350 years, Christians did not own Church buildings)

If you are part of the Church, then you have been  
“called out of the world.”

- 3) Basic understanding of Church – a people holy and set apart for the Lord

## Life of the Early Church

*“They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”*

Acts 2:42

- 1) **Apostles teaching-** Teachings handed down by our Lord to the Apostles
- 2) **Fellowship** – The unity of believers
- 3) **Breaking of the bread-** The Eucharist
- 4) **The Prayers-** The Old Testament (Psalms) & Liturgical prayers of the Church

## The Ecumenical Councils

- During the first 3 centuries the Church underwent persecutions but kept growing.
- In 312 A.D., Emperor Constantine recognized Christianity as the official religion and he himself became the first Christian emperor of the Roman Empire.
- Church flourished through the centuries, but growth led to an increase of differences in ideologies.
- The Church saw it necessary to make definitive statements of what the Church affirms to be as true and not true.

## Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.)

- **Main Issue/Concern:** Is Christ really divine?
- **Heretic:** Arius, a priest from Alexandria (Egypt)
  - Taught that Jesus was not divine
  - Taught that Jesus was only a created being, and not equal to the Father.
- **Defender:** *St. Alexander*, bishop of Alexandria, and *St. Athanasius the Great*.
  - Church teaches that Jesus is Divine, co-equal with the Father.
  - Drafted original form of Nicene Creed.
- Current churches who fall into the Arian Heresy: Arians, Unitarians, Mormons (Church of Latter Day Saints), Jehovah Witnesses.

## Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.)

- **Main Issue/Concern:** Is the Spirit divine?
- **Heretics:** *Macedonians*, also called *Pneumatachians* (spirit-fighters)
  - The Arian controversy continued with people still trying to deny the teaching of the Trinity.
  - By 360 A.D. most people accepted that Jesus was divine, but now started to teach that the Holy Spirit was not Divine, because the Nicene Creed did not stress it.
- **Defender:** St. Gregory the Theologian
  - Taught that the Church believes and confesses that the Holy Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son.
  - The paragraph regarding the Holy Spirit was added to the Creed.

## Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.)

- **Main Issue/Concern:** Understanding of who St. Mary was
- **Heretic:** *Nestorius*, Patriarch of Constantinople
  - Taught that St. Mary could not be called the Theotokos (God-bearer) or the Mother of God.
  - This heresy distorted the Church's understanding of the person of Jesus Christ
- **Defender:** *St. Cyril*, Patriarch of Alexandria
  - Explained and defended that the Church believes that the Word of God became Incarnate; Jesus Christ is a union of Divinity and Humanity.
  - This teaching is central to the Orthodox Faith because it shows how Jesus both saves and heals mankind.
- Current churches who fall into the Nestorian Heresy: The Assyrian Church of the East, Church of the East, Nestorian Church.

# Four Marks of the Church

## Church is One

- Church is one because God is one (unity)
- There is one Church, not many; and it is united, not divided

## Church is Holy

- Church is holy because God is Holy
- Members of the church are holy because of their communion with God

## Church is Catholic

- Catholicity = fullness, perfection, wholeness
- Church is universal, for all of mankind
- Church is Catholic because we participate in God's fullness, divine life
- Christ is present in every parish; cannot add anything, only grow in Him

## Church is Apostolic

- The Church is sent; mission
- Christ sent by God, Apostles sent by Christ, Church is sent by Holy Trinity
- The Church has been sent into the world, to bring the world into communion with God